

Leigh Pechillo - Heart Survivor  
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Good morning, Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Leigh Pechillo, and I reside in Southington with my husband, Thomas, my 11-year-old daughter Alexandra and my 8-year-old son Robert.

I'm here today to ask for your support of Senate Bill Number 684: AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING IN CARIDOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION.

I never thought it would happen to me. I was busy spending my time being a mother, daughter, wife, a friend. As a volunteer with the American Heart Association for seven years, I did all I could to raise money and awareness for congenital heart defects and heart disease in honor of my son and in memory of my father. Yet in a cruel twist of fate, I suffered a massive heart attack on Mother's Day, May 11, 2014. The shortness of breath I experienced the night before and the uncomfortable heart burn I felt that morning prompted me to call the doctor who said, "It could be esophageal, but I can't rule out a heart attack. Take an antacid and if it gets worse, go to the ER." I didn't make it to the ER.

When the heartburn wasn't subsiding, my husband suggested we go to the emergency room so I could get checked out. I went to the bathroom to get ready and I collapsed. My daughter heard me fall and yelled, "What was that?" My husband came running to the bathroom and when I didn't respond to his yelling, he opened the door and found me on the floor. He immediately called 9-1-1 and proceeded to administer CPR until the paramedics arrived.

Ninety percent of out-of-hospital cardiac events end in death because the victims don't receive CPR. Every medical professional has called my husband, Tom, a hero, because if he didn't perform CPR, I wouldn't have survived long enough for them to help me.

Tom knew CPR because he took a class through his workplace several years ago. Many of his staff members are required to know CPR, but as a manager he isn't. He just thought it was a good idea to know what to do in an emergency. And with 80 percent of out-of-hospital cardiac events happening in private or residential settings, the odds are a victim would receive CPR from a friend, neighbor, co-worker or loved one.

We work so hard to teach our children to so they will be well educated, kind people who are able to contribute to the communities in which they will one day live and work. Doesn't it make sense to provide them with training in a skill that they will always remember and may one day save the life of someone they love? Think of number of lives you could save by making sure this bill passes. I thank you for your time and support in passing Senate Bill 684.

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